

# The Changing Face

Many Americans take for granted their right to vote. Today, seven out of every ten Americans are allowed to vote. (The rest are not yet old enough.)

1787

The Constitution of the United States creates the federal (national) government. The Constitution leaves all decisions about voting to the individual states. Most states decide to allow only white, property-owning men over the age of 21 to vote.

At the same time, many people believe that property owners have a stronger interest in government. Women, African Americans, and poor people are not allowed to vote.

1821

New York State drops the property-owning requirement for white males. Soon, other states do the same.

1870

The Constitution is amended, or changed, to give African American men the right to vote. This change is the 15th Amendment.



# of American Voters

But it hasn't always been this way.

Check out this timeline. It shows important changes in the history of American voting.

## 1920

Again, the Constitution is amended—this time to give women the right to vote. This is the 19th Amendment.

## 1965

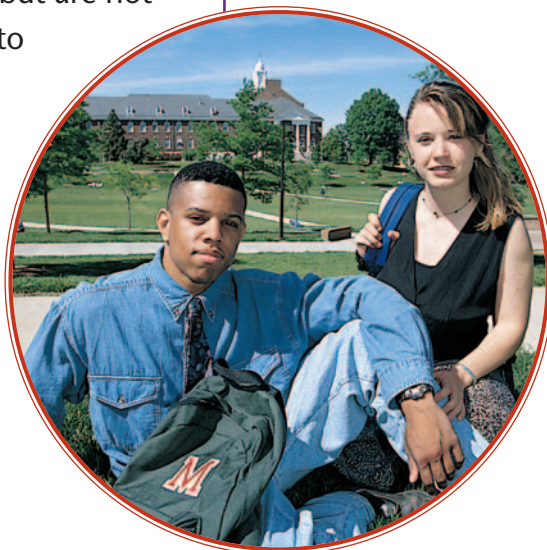
Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This law says that the unfair voting practices in many states, which make it difficult or impossible for African Americans to vote, are illegal and have to stop.

## 1971

The 26th Amendment to the Constitution lowers the voting age from 21 to 18. This happens because young American soldiers are dying in a war in Vietnam. Many people believe it is unfair that young men under 21 can be sent to fight and die in a war but are not allowed to vote.

## Today

With few exceptions, every American citizen 18 years old or older is allowed to vote. The exceptions vary from state to state. For example, some states do not allow people to vote if they have committed serious crimes or are mentally incompetent.



Adapted from an article by Mike Weinstein